

Morse code is the most basic method of radio communications, and remains second only to voice modes within the Amateur Radio Service. It holds the unique position of constituting the most common mode for backing up voice, with a 13db copyability advantage over SSB. Morse (CW) is built into every HF transmitter and receiver and transceiver. No further equipment is required other than a key, which, in an emergency, can be the mic PTT button, or any way of keying - I once made a key from a spring clothespin, superglue, and foil. Certain branches of the armed forces still teach CW to the personnel, for a good reason. Amateur operators are no longer necessarily considered a reservoir of trained operators, much of that due to the rigorous demands having nothing to do with radio. HOWEVER, it is the role of amateur radio to supply all the code operators if the mode is to survive at all. You prefer to see CW disappear. We will not settle for that. I am personally experienced in every mode of amateur operation except moonbounce and meteor scatter. But CW is my main choice.

One huge advantage is NO need for computers. The installed base of CW operators and equipment in the ARS makes it an important communications backup asset for emergency communication of all types including helping Homeland Security and with major disasters. Keeping CW gives us a weak signal capability without parallel when practical matters such as network operation are considered. Try operating a digital-based net.

While many prospective amateurs see no need for code testing for licensing, and intend to never use the mode, there is a good reason to require testing, else they may never indeed use it. Who is anyone to be so confident that they might at some point not find it interesting? If they took the test and passed, assuming the test was the old-style 'copy a full minute solid', they will not have to start from scratch. Once learned, CW is not forgotten.

I have handled NTS traffic in ice storm and windstorm conditions when power was out. I could never have done that with a voice station with a digital setup.

Amateurs not qualified in Morse operation would not be able to identify other Morse stations on the air when interference issues arise and would not know if they were sharing the same frequency with another amateur or other user who should have precedence. Unintentional interference to critical communications often occur when using digital modes. The CW operator can tell if a digital station is on frequency, whereas the typical digital station fires up in its mode and ignores all activity except in that mode. Ridiculous - but a fact.

Again, I totally oppose dropping Morse code testing for amateur licensing exams. 5 words per minute for General Class and 12 for Extra class are a minimum. This allows successful examinees to actually use CW at functional traffic-handling speeds, not less than 12 words per minute for Extra class licensees, and not less than 5 words per minute for General class licensees. 5 wpm is frankly too slow and the wrong way to learn, but is better than nothing.

I support allowing Technician class licensees to operate digital modes in the existing Novice bands.

The FISTS RM is officially on file and available now. I support that RM. If there are any questions about what I have said, I refer you to relevant portions of that document. It comes from a majority of the 7,000 or more active members of FISTS, the largest CW promoting organization in the world. Since that document was written and publicized, I have seen some increase in desire to learn Morse code and try it on the air. It is the hottest topic in communications other than

the BPL issue. Is Morse Code dead? Not in any way, and that isn't the half of it. Licensing integrity in general is at stake else we wind up with a CB or FRS type operation - licensed, no less. Your attitude about testing and Morse Code will not serve this nation, nor this world. It will also be the hand that bites you who feel it is outmoded.